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ABSTRACT

Current thinking and practice involving the use of educational technology in collaborative activities between schools and universities are described. The most successful partnerships have been those in which both parties planned and prepared themselves well before starting. Adequate resources were allocated, and mutual respect between the partners was nurtured. This digest describes four categories of partnerships involving educational technology: (1) staff development about technology; (2) staff development with distance education as a medium; (3) research on educational technology, with the joint goals of benefit to both sides; and (4) the development of new educational tools. Some examples of partnerships in each of these areas are given. Specific recommendations are provided for successful partnerships, focusing on joint goals and reciprocal exchanges. (Contains 15 references.) (SLD)

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by Bernard J. Dodge

June 1993

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School-University Partnerships and Educational Technology

by Bernard J. Dodge

According to one recent survey, at least 1,200 partnerships have been established between schools and universities (Wilbur & Lambert, 1990). This digest describes current thinking and practice involving the use of educational technology in collaborative activities between schools and universities. It is not intended to be a comprehensive review or synthesis of the literature, but rather a pointer to conceptual overviews and cases. After discussing the features of successful partnerships, this digest will describe four categories of partnerships involving educational technology:

- Staff Development about Educational Technology
- Staff Development with Distance Education Technology as a Medium
- Research on Educational Technology
- Development of New Educational Technologies

What Leads to a Successful Partnership?

For a variety of reasons the relation between universities and schools has been characterized as a "fickle romance" (Wiske, 1989). In spite of the differences between schools and universities in reward systems, schedules, roles and rules, many working partnerships have been created. The most successful projects have been those in which both parties planned and prepared themselves well before starting the partnership, adequate resources were allocated to develop and maintain the activities, and mutual respect between the partners was consciously and systematically nurtured. Among the specific recommendations derived from successful collaborators are these:

- Project goals should be jointly conceived and agreed upon. (Knapczyk, 1991; Allum, 1991)
- Teachers should be actively involved, not just passive recipients. (Knapczyk, 1991; Allum, 1991)
- If teachers are to be involved as equal partners, they must be involved for as much time as the other actors. (Wiske, 1989)
- Exchanges should be reciprocal; each partner should gain something. (Wiske, 1989)
- Education should be mutual; each party must develop an appreciation of the other's contribution. (Wiske, 1989)
- Leadership should rotate among partners as appropriate to their skills. (Balajthy, 1991)
- Outcomes should be mutually owned. (Balajthy, 1991)
- The university must be committed to the collaborative ideal and provide financial support if necessary, including stipends or load credit for faculty members. (Hillman, 1987)

Staff Development about Technology

Many partnerships have been formed with the goal of infusing technology skills into the repertoire of classroom teachers. For example, Balajthy (1991) used a model of consultative consultation in which a team made up of a consultant from the college, a classroom teacher, and several student teachers worked together to create and implement lessons using technology. Byrne, Hittleman, and Marchisotto (1989) designed a voluntary staff development experience in which classroom teachers learned to use telecommunications as a vehicle for student writing. Roseman and Brearton (1989) trained teachers in basic computer use for science education, and then trained a core subset of the original group as trainers and change agents at their own school sites.

Staff Development with Distance Education as a Medium

Collaborative staff development has also been carried out with distance education technology as the medium of delivery, rather than as the content. Pitcher, Rule, and Stowitschek (1986) used two-way audio and video to consult with and train teachers at distant sites on several special education topics. Similarly, Knapczyk (1991) used an audiographic system and fax machines to deliver special education training.

Research on Educational Technology

Several partnerships have been established to collaborate on research. These partnerships go beyond the more common arrangement of schools simply granting permission for university researchers to study their classrooms. Instead, an effort is made to jointly establish the goals of the research to the benefit of both sides. The Educational Technology Center at Harvard University has

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published several thoughtful examinations of the dynamics of this kind of collaboration (Wiske, 1989; Lampert, 1988). Hillman (1987) describes the problems that occur in implementing research when school sites have not been sufficiently involved in the initial conceptualization of the project.

Development of New Educational Technologies

The goal of the fourth category of partnership is the development of new educational tools. Typically, school sites provide input into the design process by articulating their needs, testing prototypes, and giving formative feedback. Manatt (1991) describes the creation of a computer-based management system to implement the School Improvement Model. Burger and Stevenson-Burger (1989) built a computerized management tool for schools, while another project (Ritchie & Dodge, 1992) developed a tool for student-authored adventure games. The benefit to the school partner in these examples was the possibility of having software customized to their needs. To the university partner, having a field-based source of ideas and evaluation is what made the collaboration work.

An important network of school-university partnerships is the Christopher Columbus Consortium established by Apple Computer in 1989. Each of the over 40 consortium sites represents a partnership between a university and one or more schools. With Apple serving as the catalyst with an equipment donation, the partnerships each undertook projects intended to improve education at the school site. For descriptions of some of the Christopher Columbus Consortium projects, see Ritchie and Dodge (1992) and Balajthy (1991).

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